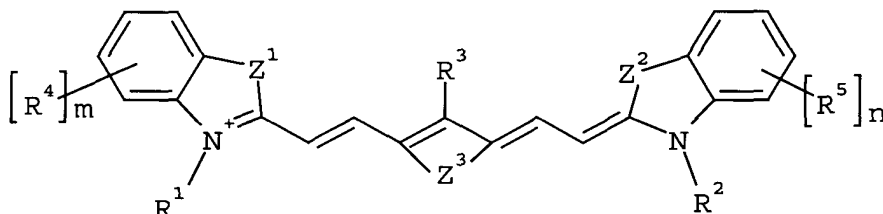


We Claim:

1. A heat-sensitive lithographic printing plate precursor comprising (i) a support having a hydrophilic surface or which is provided with a hydrophilic layer and (ii) a coating provided thereon, the coating comprising (a) an oleophilic layer which comprises a polymer that is soluble in an aqueous alkaline developer and (b) an infrared light absorbing compound according to the following formula :



wherein

- m and n each independently represent an integer from 0 to 4;
- Z¹ and Z² each independently represent one or two non-metallic atoms, which may be substituted, necessary to complete a 5- or 6-membered heterocyclic ring;
- Z³ represents two or three non-metallic atoms, which may be substituted, necessary to complete a 5- or 6-membered heterocyclic or carbocyclic ring;
- each R¹, R², R⁴ and R⁵ independently represent an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, aryl or aralkyl group, or a group selected from -G¹, -L¹-G¹, -CN, a halogen, -NO₂, -OR_a, -CO-R_a, -CO-O-R_a, -O-CO-R_d, -CO-NR_dR_e, -NR_dR_e, -NR_d-CO-R_e, -NR_d-CO-O-R_a, -NR_d-CO-NR_eR_f, -SR_d, -SO-R_a, -SO₂-R_a, -SO₂-O-R_a and -SO₂-NR_aR_b; or wherein two adjacent R⁴ and R⁵ groups together form an optionally substituted 5- or 6 membered ring which is fused to the ring formed by Z¹ or Z²;
- R³ represents a hydrogen or a halogen atom, -L₂-G², an alkyl group, an alkenyl group, an aralkyl group, an aryl group, a thioalkyl group or a thioaryl group, each of said groups being optionally substituted;

with

- L_1 and L_2 being a divalent linking group;
- R_a , R_b and R_c being an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, aryl or aralkyl group;
- R_d , R_e , and R_f being hydrogen or an optionally substituted alkyl,
5 alkenyl, aryl or aralkyl group;

wherein the solubilizing groups G^1 and G^2 are anionic or become anionic in an aqueous alkaline solution having a pH of at least 9 and wherein the total number of the solubilizing groups G^1 and G^2 is equal to three, four or five.

- 10 2. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein R^3 comprises at least one of said solubilizing groups.
3. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^4 and R^5 each comprise one of said solubilizing groups.
4. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein the IR
15 light absorbing compound comprises three solubilizing groups, of which one is comprised in each of R^1 , R^2 and R^3 .
5. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein the IR light absorbing compound comprises three solubilizing groups, of which one is comprised in each of R^3 , R^4 and R^5 .
- 20 6. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein the IR light absorbing compound comprises four solubilizing groups, of which one is comprised in each of R^1 , R^2 , R^4 and R^5 .
7. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein Z^1 and Z^2 are $-C(CH_3)_2-$.
- 25 8. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein Z^3 is $-(CH_2)_2-$ or $-(CH_2)_3-$.
9. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein R^3 is $-Cl$ or optionally substituted $-S-C_6H_5$.

10. A printing plate precursor according to claim 1 wherein the solubilizing group is a carboxy group, a sulfo group or a hydroxy group, or salts thereof.